

film

Strong people cry; injustice trembles

"TO DIE FOR ONE'S COUNTRY IS TO LIVE"

Directed by Santiago Alvarez

A new Cuban film distributed by Tricontinental Films

By MARIAN McDONALD

For Cuban filmmaker Santiago Alvarez, whose wife Magaly Grave de Peralta was one of 73 people killed in the explosion of a Cuban plane Oct. 6, this brief film is "my way of throwing a flower into the waters off Barbados."

But it is more: It is also a story of turning grief into anger, into revolutionary determination and dignity.

The film, prepared in a matter of weeks by a mourning nation, seems simple enough. And that is its power. If you look closely you will see the film's design. There is a stanza of grief and honor, the sounds of the ceremony for the dead

when over 1 million people gathered in Havana to pay tribute to the dead. Then a stanza of life, of Fidel, recounting in his unusually brief speech the many recent actions of the CIA against Cuba, of which the explosion was the most brutal. Then the stanza of horror and death—the explosion of the plane, lighting up the Caribbean skies. Back to a stanza of honor: this time the funeral trumpet. And finally back to a stanza of Fidel, symbol of the revolution.

"We could ask ourselves what are they [the CIA] after with these crimes," says Fidel. "To destroy the revolution?" The million grieving Cubans shout "NO! Impossible!"

Who were those killed on the Cubana de Aviacion flight Oct. 6? An edition of Granma dedicated to those killed and to exposing the CIA's role helps us find the answer. They were ordinary Cuban people.

One such person is Wilfredo Perez, the pilot, heroically calm at first then tense as he realizes there is no hope. Perez had just been elected National Hero of Labor. He had said that flying was his battle trench and that if his fate were to die, he would die happy.

Marlene Gonzalez and Tomas Rodriguez were married comrades whose work often separated them. She a stewardess,

he a copilot, they made special plans to end a 2-week separation to be together for Marlene's birthday on the eighth. They never celebrated that birthday.

A young fencer whose team had just won all the gold medals in a meet in Venezuela, Nancy Uranga was studying biology.

Four of the five Korean dead were members, including two chairpersons, of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea.

The father of 23-year-old Roberto Ricardo Cabrera, an architecture student and gold medal fencer, spoke of his lost son: "As a son and as a brother, he was marvelous. As a friend, all you have to do is ask all those who knew him. I have four other children, and they are all ready to give their lives if necessary."

Fidel's words bring the film/ceremony to a close, summing up the lessons of the nation's grief.

"We can't say that the pain is shared. The pain multiplies. Millions of Cubans today cry together with the loved ones of the victims of the abominable crime. And, when a strong and determined people cries, injustice trembles. Patria o muerte! Venceremos!"